



**Fight Poverty  
with PASSION**

**VISTA Candidate  
Conference Call  
January 8, 2015**

**Presented by: Jackie Girard and Anna Yeagle**

**Conference Call #: 1-877-922-5039**

**Passcode: 34324057**

# Introductions and Housekeeping

- CNCS Montana State Office
- Montana VISTA Project Supervisors and VISTA Leaders
- Welcome to all candidates
- Press \*6 to mute your phone and \*6 to unmute your phone

# Agenda

- Terms, Conditions & Benefits
- Living Allowance
- Year of service
- Details of PSO



# Terms, Conditions, and Benefits of Service

# Employee vs. Member

- An AmeriCorps VISTA member is not an employee of the sponsoring organization.
- An AmeriCorps VISTA member is a federal resource on loan to a local organization.
- A member is also not an employee of the Corporation for National and Community Service or AmeriCorps VISTA, except for very specific purposes (see "Unemployment Compensation" section in Chapter 14) outlined in the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973.

# Acceptable/Unacceptable Terms

- Acceptable Terms

- Member

- Position, Slot

- Service, Serves with

- Living Allowance

- Unacceptable Terms

Employee, Worker,  
*Volunteer*

Job

Employment, Works for

Wage, Salary, Pay

# General Terms of Service

- Term of Service:
  - 12 months, 365 days, excluding PSO training.
  - Technically, serving 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. Member is expected to serve within the work hours of the sponsoring agency with some flexibility and some exceptions (holiday leave). If a member serves extra time in one week due to a heavy workload, it is expected that they will receive time off to compensate.
  - Member can receive a maximum of two Education Awards.



# Entering Requirements

- Must be a US Citizen, National or Legal Resident
- Criminal Background Check:
  - VISTA requires a background check to ensure vulnerable community members with whom we work - children, individuals with disabilities, and those over 60 years old - are protected from abusive, predatory behavior.
  - Required for positions designed to work with vulnerable populations.
  - Fingerprinting will be completed at Pre-Service Orientation (PSO).
  - VISTA Project Staff completes a national Sex Offender Registry Check on each applicant before accepting them.
  - Applicants must disclose (in their application) convictions of any criminal offenses and/or if they are facing any pending charges or on probation/parole. If a member does not disclose convictions, pending charges or probation/parole they will be removed from service.



# Prohibitions

- **Full and Part-Time Employment is Prohibited**
  - AmeriCorps VISTA service requires a full immersion in the project and community.
- **Educational Courses**
  - Full-time enrollment prohibited.
  - Part-time enrollment in school is permitted with approval from the Project Sponsor and as long as it doesn't interfere with the VISTA assignment. The course should support the Member's assignment.

# Laws and Policies

- AmeriCorps VISTAs are prohibited from providing religious instruction or proselytizing as part of their duties.
- AmeriCorps VISTAs and project sponsors are prohibited from requesting or receiving any compensation for the services of members.
  - If an agency or member of the community would like to help a VISTA with housing, food, or other items, it must be done by paying for the rent or mortgage directly, or by purchasing needed items for the VISTA member. It cannot be done by giving cash to the VISTA. Gift cards are considered cash.

# Additional Laws and Policies

- AmeriCorps VISTAs **may not participate in** political campaigns or voter registration drives, provide transportation to the polls, lobby, engage in pro- or anti-labor organizing, or take any action with respect to partisan or nonpartisan political activity while on duty or perceived to be on duty as an AmeriCorps member. This falls under the Hatch Act.
  - This includes answering questions on the phone, preparing packets, etc.
- The VISTA member handbook contains a description of the Basic Laws and Federal Regulations.

# Pre-Service Orientation (PSO)

- Pre-Service Orientation (PSO) occurs just prior to the time a VISTA begins service. It is an orientation for candidates to the VISTA program—its mission, programming initiatives, conditions and benefits of service. Candidates also complete administrative in-processing and are introduced to key skill areas and effective practices.
- VISTA Candidate must successfully participate in Pre-Service Orientation (PSO) prior to the start of service



Questions?



# **VISTA Year of Service**

# VISTA Basics

- **Every VISTA member serves with a host site through a project sponsor.**
- **12-month, full-time commitment. Not a 9-to-5 job. In fact it is not a job at all.**
- **Every candidate will be provided a VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)**
- ***Members must maintain a signed time sheet/log***
- ***Members will be evaluated by their host site supervisor***
- **VISTA members are not allowed to provide direct service**



# Capacity Building vs. Direct Service

- **Direct Service: The act of providing services to the organization, identified recipients or clients of a program.**
- VISTA members may not provide direct service unless it is for a short period of time to familiarize them with the agency, activities or programs. This service must be relative to your VISTA project plan
- **Capacity Building: Tasks and activities to create, expand, or strengthen systems or processes in order to increase an organization's ability to function effectively and meet its mission.**
  - **These tasks and activities include the transfer of skills, products and relationships**
- Capacity building activities must be VISTA members' main focus and must pertain to their VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

# Leave

- Personal and Medical Leave
  - 10 work days personal leave and 10 work days sick leave per service year. Additional 5 sick days with State Program Director (SPD) approval.
  - Leave must be approved by project supervisor.
  - Host Site Holiday Leave (not allowed)
- Emergency Leave
  - One week for death or critical illness in immediate family; additional time requires SPD approval.
  - Corporation will pay for round trip transportation.

# VISTA Benefits/Health Coverage

## VISTA Campus

- [http://www.vistacampus.gov/in-service/benefits-service#health\\_coverage](http://www.vistacampus.gov/in-service/benefits-service#health_coverage)

**Under the Affordable Care Act, all Americans – including VISTAs – are required to have health insurance.** So you're expected to have health insurance when you become an AmeriCorps VISTA member unless you are exempt from this requirement.

VISTA members who maintain health insurance during their service term may opt into the **AmeriCorps VISTA Healthcare Allowance**. This allowance is a supplemental healthcare reimbursement program that covers out-of-pocket costs associated with healthcare. Out-of-pocket expenses may include: your annual deductible, coinsurance, copayments, and other charges for qualified medical expenses. The Healthcare Allowance will help offset these expenses up to \$6,600 in 2015. The Healthcare Allowance does not cover costs associated with premium payment or charges associated with dependents or any other individuals covered under your healthcare plan.

VISTA members who are legally exempt from maintaining health insurance coverage during their term of service are eligible to enroll in the **AmeriCorps VISTA Health Benefit Plan**, a self-funded, basic health plan. The plan is available to eligible members at no cost and covers most non-routine services, limited preventive care visits (e.g., an annual ob-gyn visit for women), medical emergencies, surgical and hospitalization expenses, and certain prescription drug costs. It does not cover pre-existing conditions, routine dental care, or vision. The plan does not cover dependents, including your spouse.

# VISTA Benefits/Health Coverage cont.

The AmeriCorps Health Benefits Plan, while an excellent support for most VISTAs, **is not insurance and does not satisfy the individual responsibility requirement of the Affordable Care Act (ACA).**

International Medical Group (IMG) is the administrator of the AmeriCorps VISTA Healthcare Allowance and the AmeriCorps VISTA Health Benefit Plan. For details about either benefit, please visit: [americorpsvista.imglobal.com](http://americorpsvista.imglobal.com).

To access an on-demand webinar, FAQs, and other resources on your healthcare options and how the Affordable Care Act applies to VISTAs, go to [vistacampus.gov/healthcare](http://vistacampus.gov/healthcare).

At the start of your VISTA term, you'll need to complete a Member Enrollment Form to indicate which benefit option you would like. The form can be completed online by creating a "My IMG VISTA" account at [americorpsvista.imglobal.com](http://americorpsvista.imglobal.com) or by downloading the [Member Enrollment Form](#) and sending it to IMG.

## **Special Enrollment Period:**

If you'd like to purchase insurance through the Health Insurance Marketplace, you can take advantage of the special enrollment period for all AmeriCorps members. This special enrollment period gives you the opportunity to purchase insurance through the Health Insurance Marketplace outside of the public open enrollment period. You have 60 days from your service start and end dates to sign-up for healthcare coverage through the marketplace. To apply for coverage under the Special Enrollment Period, contact the Marketplace Call Center at 1-800-318-2596. Shop for coverage and learn more about enrolling in the Health Insurance Marketplace at [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov).

# VISTA Member Living Allowance

- The Living Allowance is not a wage, it only allows the member to serve full time
- Living Allowance amount:
  - \$447.84/pay period
  - \$973.00/month
  - \$11,676/year

# Use your money wisely...

- Candidates should prepare to live on a limited budget.
- Prepare to give up going to the movies, weekly shopping trips to the mall, cable television, etc.
- Candidates need to be prepared to find no cost means of entertainment like volunteering, hiking, reading books from the library, etc.

# Use your money wisely...

- “5 Rules for AmeriCorps VISTA”

You Tube video (less than 10 minutes long)

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3-fOYj8d58>.



Can you say??

# COMMITMENT

I YEAR COMMITMENT REQUIRED

CAN YOU DO IT?

CAN'T ☐

CAN! ☒





- QUESTIONS



# PSO DETAILS

# PSO - REQUIRED

- January 27-29, 2015
- Arrive by no later than 10am on the 27<sup>th</sup> and depart no earlier than 3pm on the 29<sup>th</sup>
- Holiday Inn Express
  - 3170 Sanders Street
  - Helena, MT
  - (406) 442-7500
- Complete all on-line paperwork prior to attending PSO.
- Fingerprinting
- Info to follow
  - Welcome letter

# Transportation and Lodging

- Transportation
  - e-mail from the VISTA Member Support Unit will confirm and approve transportation. Do not travel until you receive this approval
- Arrival at PSO on January 26, 2015
  - More than a two hour drive, driving across county, or flying into Helena, MT
- Lodging during PSO
  - Relocating to Montana
  - Living and serving in Helena, MT



**IF I ONLY KNEW...**

# If I only Knew...

- Banking in Montana
- Cell phone service
- Housing – do you have a place to live??
- Winters in Montana
- Yes, we have bears
- The sky is bigger in Montana
- A slower pace



# If I only Knew...

## Laws of Montana

<http://courts.mt.gov/library/topic/default.mcpx>

- You must register your vehicle with the Montana Motor Vehicles Division, even if you are not planning on becoming a permanent resident <http://www.dmv.org/mt-montana/car-registration.php#Registering-a-Vehicle-in-Montana>

# Questions

- Project Supervisors – additional advice
- General questions about MT



# Resources and Information

# VISTA Campus

<http://vistacampus.org/>

- Information for VISTA members, Host Site Supervisors, and VISTA Project Sponsors
- A “One Stop Shop” for all things VISTA
- Everything you ever wanted to know about VISTA – best practices, Webinars, etc.



**Additional Questions or  
concerns?**



To confirm your participation on  
this webinar you must e-mail the  
phrase below to your VISTA  
Project Sponsor

“

”

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# Chat dialogue

- From Mary Seerveld to Everyone: It's exactly \$6 above the federal poverty line.
- From Dan Stephenson to Everyone: Is the pay listed before or after taxes?
- From Mary Seerveld to Everyone: Before, IIRC.
- From Dan Stephenson to Everyone: That's what I thought too
- From Mary Seerveld to Everyone: I can't imagine taxes would take much out of it.
- From Mary Seerveld to Everyone: But when there's so little to start with...
- From Penny Feltner to Everyone: one would hope...
- From Mary Seerveld to Everyone: Yep!
- From Dan Stephenson to Everyone: We are allowed to volunteer our time outside of service doing things like tutoring right?
- From Dan Stephenson to Everyone: Sure
- From Mary Seerveld to Everyone: i'm getting a lot of weird static?
- From Mary Seerveld to Everyone: seems to have subsided.
- From Rosie Goldich to Everyone: I agree with Melinda. I've submitted my travel form at least twice, but I keep getting error messages.
- From Rosie Goldich to Everyone: And I haven't been able to get a confirmation.
- From Cahrissa Dasso to Everyone: I did too, but when I called they could see everything that I filled out
- From Rosie Goldich to Everyone: I'm driving to Havre on the 30th!
- From Dalya Kefi to Everyone: Need to get to and from Bozeman!



# Chat dialogue (Continued)

- From Victoria Green to Everyone: Hello, Is anyone going to Hamilton and willing to carpool together?
- From Mary Seerveld to Everyone: For the record: Flying in to Helena from out of state, hoping to avoid having to Greyhound to Billings. Hi everybody!
- From Coral Thede to Everyone: Anyone in the Northern Colorado area going to Helena?
- From Julynn Wilderson to Everyone: I'm driving in from Colorado!
- From Michele Schahczenski to Everyone: FYI I am driving from Missoula to Helena.
- From Julynn Wilderson to Everyone: IDK my route and timeframe have been pretty fluid but FoCo is def an option.
- From Julynn Wilderson to Everyone: Definitely!
- From Mary Seerveld to Everyone: When I asked my friends from cold places about coats, they said: put your mouth against the sleeve like you're giving it CPR and breathe into your sleeve. If you can feel the air on your arm, your coat isn't insulated well enough.
- From Dan Stephenson to Everyone: When I asked my friends about bears, they said keep honey in your pocket to toss at them and they'll be your friend for life.
- From Penny Feltner to Everyone: Don't say things like that
- From Julynn Wilderson to Everyone: what good friends
- From Rosie Goldich to Everyone: I heard that Montana doesn't have official speed limits. Is this true?
- From Sage Hatch to Everyone: Will we get a copy of this powerpoint after the presentation?
- From Dan Stephenson to Everyone: How long do we have to get a Montana plate for our cars?

# Chat dialogue (Continued)

- From Penny Feltner to Everyone: We don't have to get a Montana license?
- From Dan Stephenson to Everyone: Do we not need to get a Montana license during our term of service?
- From Michele Schahczenski to Everyone: Sure thing!
- From Abby Zent to Everyone: I believe the law says within 2 months of moving to Montana you need to register your car.
- From Jon Van Dyke to Everyone: You can get a temporary (30-day) plate from County vehicle registration, free of charge I think
- From Coral Thede to Everyone: If we're living in a new state do we need a new license?
- From Cahrissa Dasso to Everyone: we shouldnt need to get a new license
- From Dan Stephenson to Everyone: Also, there's a CDC checklist for driving in winter conditions: <http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/beforestorm/supplylists.asp#car> I found it helpful
- From Gina Simonetti to Everyone: I would also strongly recommend having a Montana road map in your car
- From Abby Zent to Everyone: Here's the link to the Montana Dept of Transportation's traveler info website, <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/>
- From Mary Seerveld to Everyone: 'Cuz you can't rely on your phone's GPS, because there won't always be service.
- From Dan Stephenson to Everyone: " \_\_\_\_\_ " can do
- From Dan Stephenson to Everyone: Gina is my project sponsor, right? For Billings METRO?
- From Gina Simonetti to Everyone: Correct, Dan

# Chat dialogue (Continued)

- From Michele Schahczenski to Everyone: And mine is Maura right? for MTCC?
- From Jon Van Dyke to Everyone: MCC?
- From Penny Feltner to Everyone: Thanks!
- From Victoria Green to Everyone: Thank you
- From Julynn Wilderson to Everyone: Thank you!
- From Dan Stephenson to Everyone: Cool kids use chat; thanks bye
- From Mary Seerveld to Everyone: Thanks again!